USACE Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) for Urban Search & Rescue (US&R)

US Army Corps of Engineers
BUILDING STRONG®

US Army Corps of Engineers Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Program

Critical Incident

A **critical incident** is an event or series of events that overwhelms one's normal

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

CISM is a comprehensive, systematic, and integrated multi-tactic crisis intervention approach to manage critical incident stress after traumatic events.

Crisis Intervention

Crisis Intervention = temporary, but active and supportive entry into the life of individuals or groups during extreme stress.

"Emotional First Aid"

CISM Milestones

- **1982** - 1st year CISM was applied (Air Florida disaster in Washington D.C.); 1st mass disaster use of group crisis intervention - Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) application
- Need for CISM in USACE US&R applications included in 3 Jan 2002 *World Trade Center USACE US&R After Action Report (AAR)*
- **5 Sep 2003** - CISM PDT authorized by LTG Flowers – establish a model national CISM program for potential implementation
- **15 May 2006** - LTG Strock authorized nationwide implementation of a CISM program

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

- **Peer-driven** stress management program to include pre-crisis preparation, stress education, and intervention
- Helps people recover more quickly from **normal reactions** to **abnormally stressful** events
- **Complements/supplement**s Employee Assistance Program (***EAP***)

Why Should We Worry About Critical Incident Stress?

- Decline in productivity
- Increased sick leave
- Functional impairment
- Stress disorders
- Increased use of drugs and alcohol
- Loss of employee from organization
- Bottom line - direct connection between stress and one's health and productivity

POTENTIAL CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS SYMPTOMS:

- Confusion
- Difficulty making decisions
- Lowered concentration
- Memory loss
- Shock
- Anger/irritability
- Grief
- Depression
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Excessive sweating
- Dizzy spells
- Increased heart rate/blood pressure
- Anxiety
- Re-experiencing the event; flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Difficulty sleeping
- Exhaustion/hyperactivity
- Guilt
- Unusually prolonged silences
- Marital/family problems
- Numbing, withdrawal, isolation
- Decline in job performance
- Loss of appetite
- Uncontrollable emotions
- Physical/psychological fatigue

USACE CISM Peer Support Concept :

- Key underpinning: Employee may prefer to discuss issues with fellow employee vs. going to mental health professional
- Peer support intervention may also **bridge** to professional counseling through EAP

USACE CISM Peer Support

- Initial crisis intervention - can be individual (one-on-one) or group
- Intervention is initiated *by the employee*, who requests CISM assistance through their supervisor
- Wide range of applications - often assistance is requested following an event response but can pertain to non-event/personal issues or concerns
- If interested, employee may wish to seek further assistance from mental health professional through EAP
- Employee can also request follow up peer support sessions

One-On-One Intervention

- Voluntary – at request of employee
- Can follow a defusing or debriefing group session
- Opportunity for individual to raise issues not discussed during group format
- Can be a stand-alone intervention (i.e. does not have to follow defusing or debriefing)
- Confidential
- Acknowledges individual personal crisis
- Facilitates problem solving
- Encourages acceptance/utilization of resources and coping skills
- May lead to referral to mental health professional

CISM Advantages

- CISM is an excellent first step for people needing someone to talk to but are reluctant to seek out a mental health professional
- CISM can be present in daily situations where the mental health professional often cannot go
- CISM is analogous to first aid. It has the potential to mitigate initial emotional reactions from evolving to more serious psychological symptoms requiring longer term clinical therapy

CISM: A Practical Consideration

From a veteran fire fighter and CISM instructor…

"In the same way a doctor would believe that someone with a broken leg shouldn't charge up a hill…you can't go back to work effectively til your mind's right…"

– Vaughn Donaldson 13 Feb 2007

Goals

- Mitigate impact of the event
- Provide a safe and confidential haven to discuss incident
- Foster normal recovery process in normal people who are having normal reactions to abnormal events
- Restore adaptive functioning

CISM and EAP

- CISM **complements and supplements** the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- CISM does not duplicate the EAP program, but can serve as a bridge to other services under EAP
- A mental health professional/trauma specialist participates in CISD interventions
- Follow Up with affected employees 30 days post-incident

CISM Peer Support and Employee Assistance Program

Peer Support

- Crisis Intervention and Education
  - Immediate/short term
  - 1-2 visits
- Emphasis
  - Prevention & Education
- On location Corps-wide support
- Provide EAP contact information
- Peer Supporter drives the process
- Individual(s) may decide to defer to mental health professional through EAP

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

- Therapy
  - Long term
  - 12 or more visits
- Emphasis
  - Treatment
- Clinical Setting
- If Symptoms Worsen
  - Treatment continues
- Therapist drives the process

CISM Peer Support Team

- The CISM Peer Support Team consists of US Army Corps of Engineers employee volunteers trained in CISM interventions
- The CISM Team provides information about critical incidents and stress reactions that employees can use to help identify healthy life choices. The team provides an atmosphere of concern and caring as well as identifying personal options for dealing with stress

Key CISM Summary Points

- As CISM proponent LTG Strock indicated***, " ...as we move forward, we will be one team focused on taking care of our people...including leaders ensuring employees have the right tools and meaningful work in a safe environment. It also includes teammates taking care of each other and employees living a healthy and balanced lifestyle."***
- Learn to recognize critical incident stress symptoms – both in yourself and your teammates
- USACE CISM Peer support personnel provide a safe environ to impart perspective and defuse issues (group or individual applications)
- Further CISM assistance is also available through EAP

CISM Program Website

More information on USACE CISM Program, FAQs, and Division/District POCs can be found at:

http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/cism/cism.cfm

Submit Your Information

Click here when finished viewing the presen tation.

Once you enter the information that is requested, the RSC will receive an email indicating your course completion. A member of the RSC will manually update your PDS after that. You will not receive a certificate after you review the presentation.